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FARMERS' BULLETIN 767

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

*rev. Apr. 1922*

Rev. ed.  
follows

# GOOSE RAISING



**G**EESE can be raised successfully and profitably in all parts of the United States, but are most abundant in the South and Middle West. They subsist very largely on grass during the growing season and are the closest of grazers; therefore they are most economically raised where pastures are abundant and where the grass remains green and tender during long seasons.

They can be housed very cheaply, as they need protection only during cold or stormy weather, and in the South are raised successfully without shelter.

Geese could be raised profitably on many more farms than at present, as both old and young are very hardy and are rarely affected with disease.

Opportunities for raising geese at a profit are especially good in sections where geese are fattened commercially to meet a great demand in our large eastern cities among people of foreign descent.

Detailed information on the management of geese is given in this bulletin.

Contribution from the Bureau of Animal Industry

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Washington, D. C.

Issued January, 1921  
Revised, April, 1922

# GOOSE RAISING.

ALFRED R. LEE, *Animal Husbandry Division.*

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## GOOSE PRODUCTION.

Geese are raised successfully in all parts of the United States, but are most abundant in the Middle West and South. According to the census of 1920, Illinois, with 195,769 geese, contained the greatest number, but each of the States of Missouri, Arkansas, and Iowa nearly equaled this. Following these States, but with a considerably lower number of geese, came Kentucky, Tennessee, Minnesota, North Carolina, and Texas. The ascendancy in the number of geese kept on farms has passed very largely from the South Central to the North Central States during the last ten years. About one-tenth of the farms in the United States reported geese. Geese could be raised profitably on many more farms, as they are hardy, are the closest grazers known, and will get almost their entire living from a good pasture.

## BREEDS.

Six breeds of geese have been admitted to the American Standard of Perfection, namely, Toulouse, Embden, Chinese, African, Wild or Canadian, and Egyptian. In addition to the standard breeds there are the Sebastopol and the so-called Mongrel goose, which is a hybrid made by crossing one of these varieties, usually the Toulouse or African, with the Wild or Canadian goose. Crosses of the standard varieties of geese, especially of the African gander on the Toulouse or Embden, are occasionally made, but without any apparent gain. The latter cross is in favor with some of the breeders who make a specialty of forced feeding or noodling geese, and also for the production of young green geese for market, but is not recommended beyond the first cross. The common goose found on many farms contains more or less blood of some of the standard breeds and of the

Wild goose, and is usually considerably smaller than the standard Toulouse or Embden. It may be greatly improved by crossing with a purebred gander. The Toulouse, Embden, African, and Chinese are easily the most popular breeds of geese in this country, the first two greatly leading the other breeds. Geese are kept primarily for the production of flesh and feathers, although their eggs are occasionally used for cooking.

## STANDARD WEIGHTS OF GEESSE.

*Toulouse.*

	Lbs.		Lbs.
Adult gander-----	26	Adult goose-----	20
Young gander-----	20	Young goose-----	16

*Emden.*

	Lbs.		Lbs.
Adult gander-----	20	Adult goose-----	18
Young gander-----	18	Young goose-----	16

*African.*

	Lbs.		Lbs.
Adult gander-----	20	Adult goose-----	18
Young gander-----	16	Young goose-----	14

*Chinese.*

	Lbs.		Lbs.
Adult gander-----	12	Adult goose-----	10
Young gander-----	10	Young goose-----	8

*Wild or Canadian.*

	Lbs.		Lbs.
Adult gander-----	12	Adult goose-----	10
Young gander-----	10	Young goose-----	8

*Egyptian.*

	Lbs.		Lbs.
Adult gander-----	10	Adult goose-----	8
Young gander-----	8	Young goose-----	6

## TOULOUSE.

The Toulouse goose (fig. 1) derives its name from the city of Toulouse, in southern France, in a territory noted for its geese. The Toulouse is the largest and most popular of the standard breeds of geese. The color of the plumage is dark gray on the back, gradually shading to light gray edged with white on the breast, and to white on the abdomen. The eye should be dark brown or hazel, the bill pale orange, and the shanks and toes a deep-reddish orange. The body is massive, of medium length, broad and very deep, almost touching

the ground. The female resembles the male but is smaller. The Toulouse is a good layer, producing from 20 to 35 eggs a year; is docile, grows rapidly, and makes a good market bird. Its dark pinfeathers, however, make it a slightly less attractive market goose than the Embden. The Toulouse as a rule is a nonsitter.

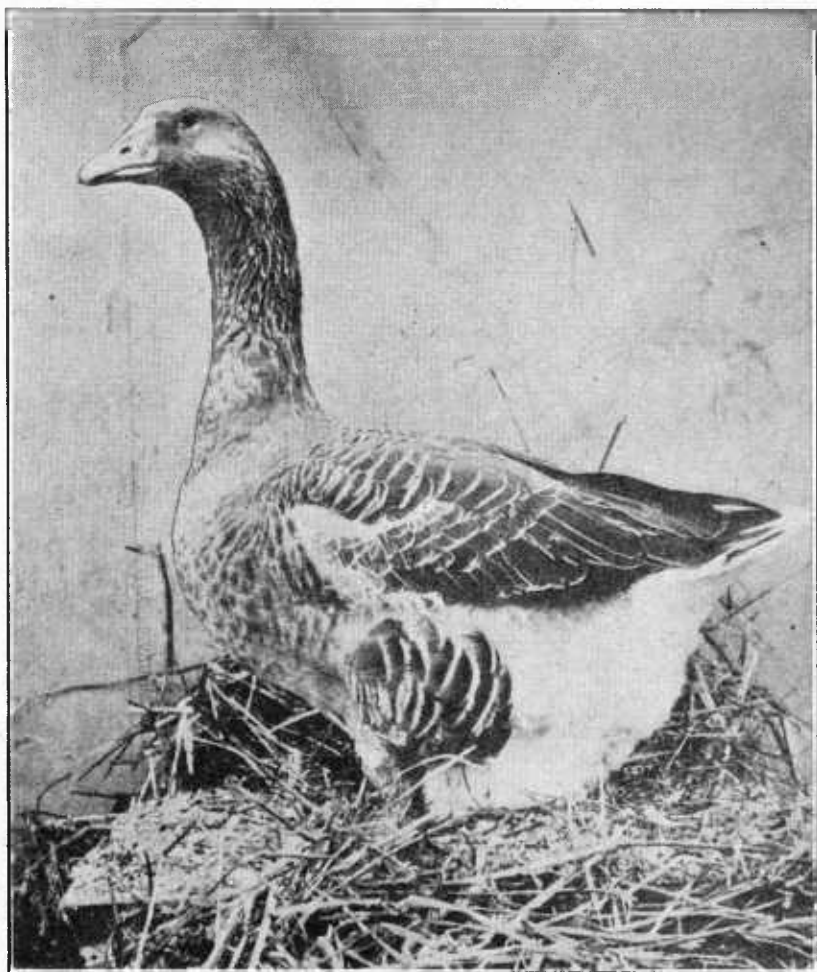


FIG. 1.—Toulouse goose.

#### EMBDEN.

The Embden (fig. 2) was one of the first breeds of geese imported into the United States, where they were known as Bremen, from the city whence they came. It is a large, white goose, slightly smaller than the Toulouse, making it appear more upstanding. The plumage is pure white. The Embden is a good layer but usually is not quite so prolific as the Toulouse, although the egg yield varies greatly

among individuals in all the breeds. The Embden is a much better sitter than the Toulouse. The breed makes a very good market bird, as it has white pinfeathers, is a rapid grower, and matures early.

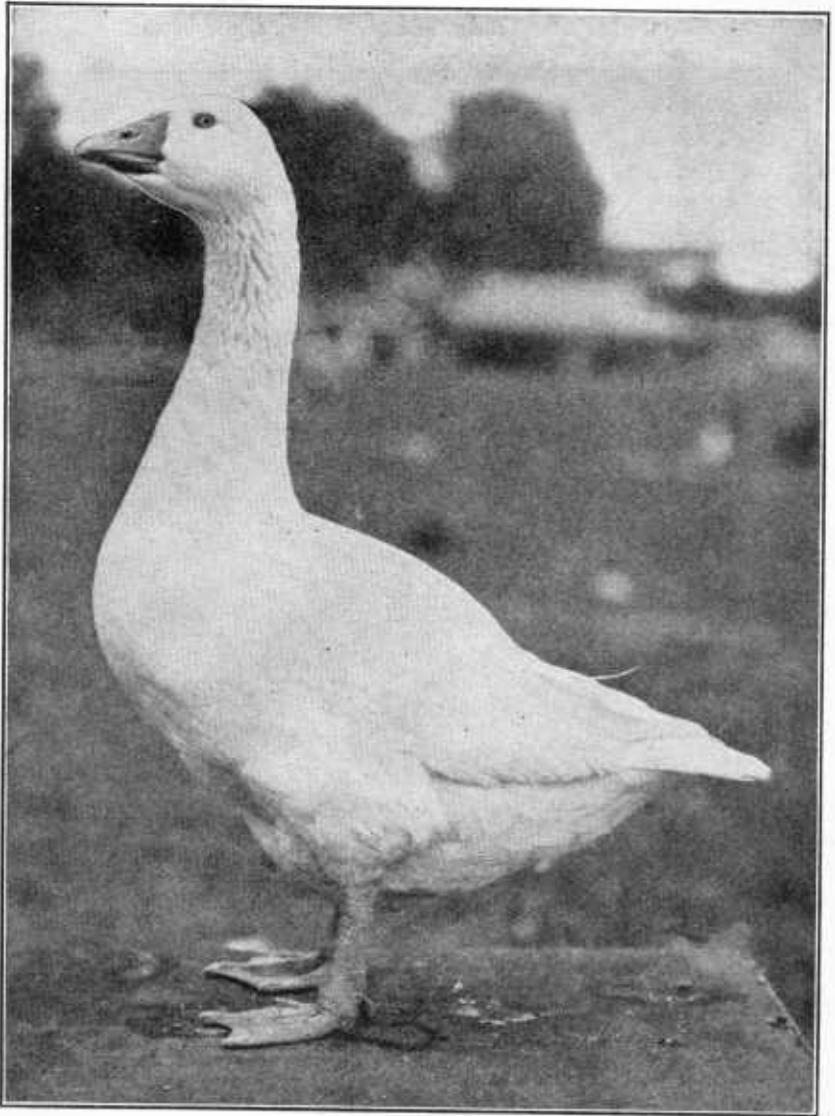


FIG. 2.—Embden gander.

**AFRICAN.**

The African (fig. 3) is a gray goose, about the size of the Embden, with a distinct brown shade. It has, however, a distinctive knob or protuberance on its head, and its carriage is more erect and the body

more oblong and higher from the ground than the Toulouse. The head, knob, and bill are black, the eyes are dark brown, the plumage dark gray on the wings and back and gray or light gray on the neck, breast, and underside of the body. The African is a good layer, about equal in production to the Toulouse, and makes a good market

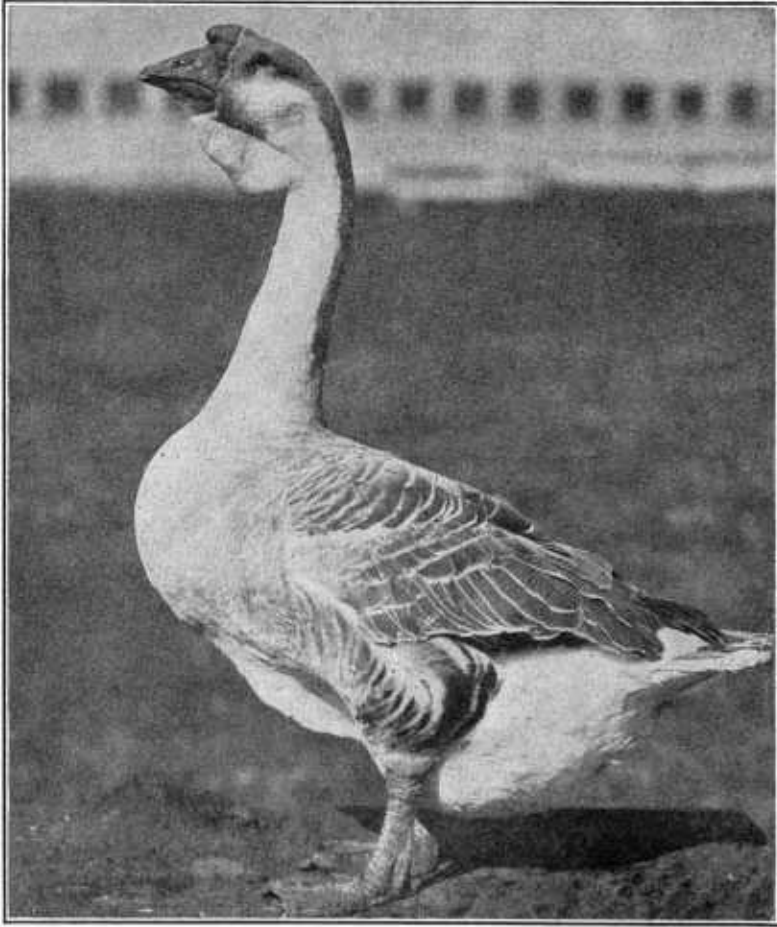


FIG. 3.—African gander.

goose. The males are especially liked for crossing on other varieties in producing fancy market products. It is a rapid grower and matures early.

#### CHINESE.

There are two standard varieties of Chinese geese, the Brown and the White (figs. 4 and 5). This goose is much smaller than the other standard breeds and more swanlike in appearance. The Brown goose has a grayish-brown color which is lighter on the underside of the



body, with a brown head, a dark-brown or black knob, and a black bill. The White Chinese goose has a pure white plumage with an orange-colored bill and knob. Both varieties mature early and are

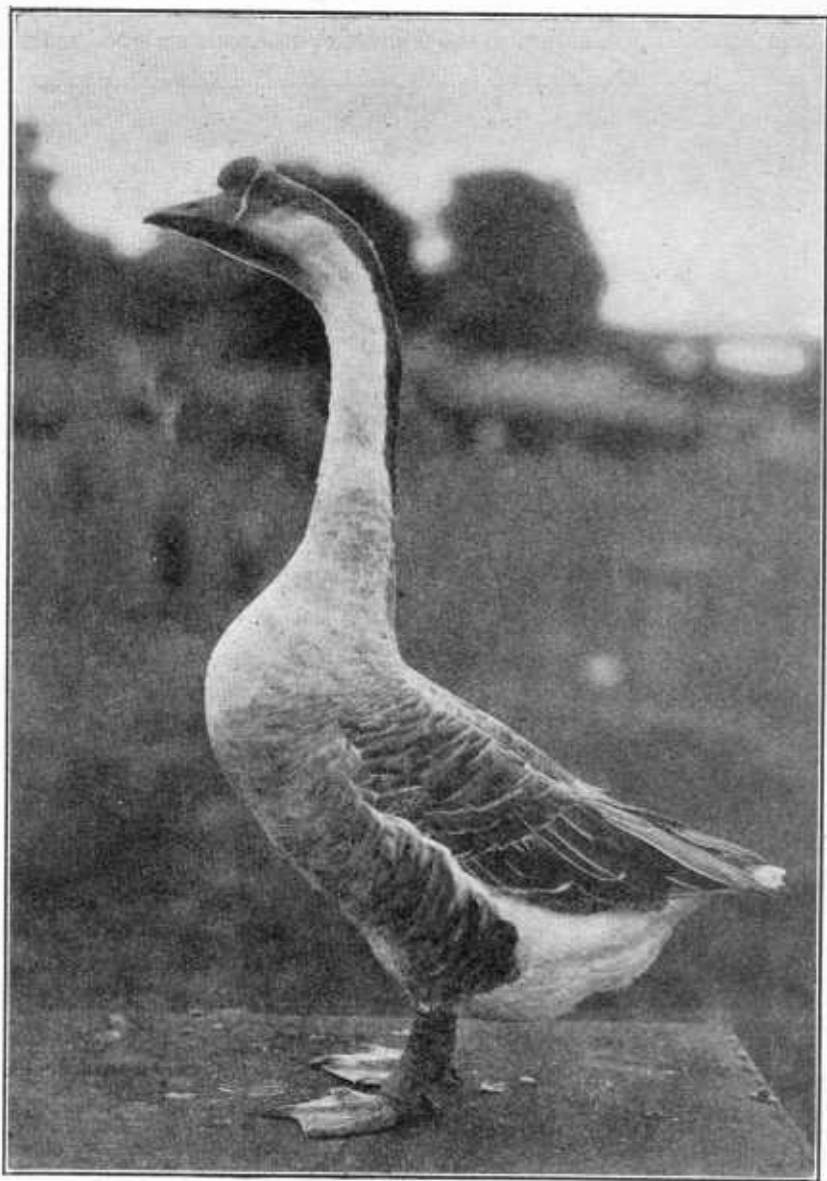


FIG. 4.—Brown Chinese gander.

better layers than the other breeds, but lay a smaller egg. They are rapid growers but are shy and rather difficult to handle. Some geese breeders object to them because of their excessive noise.

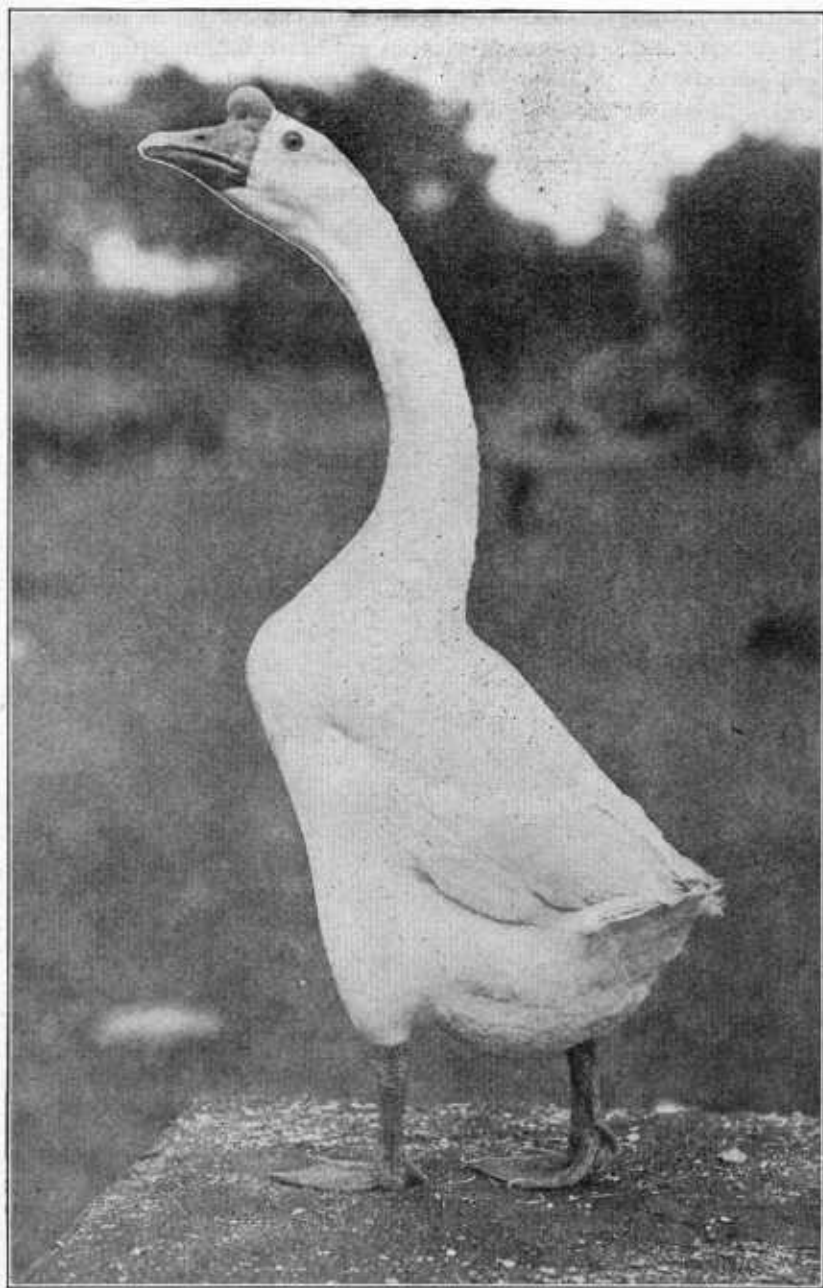


FIG. 5.—White Chinese gander.

## WILD OR CANADIAN.

While the Wild or Canadian geese are not considered a really practical variety, they are bred to some extent in captivity, and on account of their wild and peculiar appearance are much sought after to ornament private and public parks. They are also much in demand by hunters to use as decoys. Their standard weights are the same as

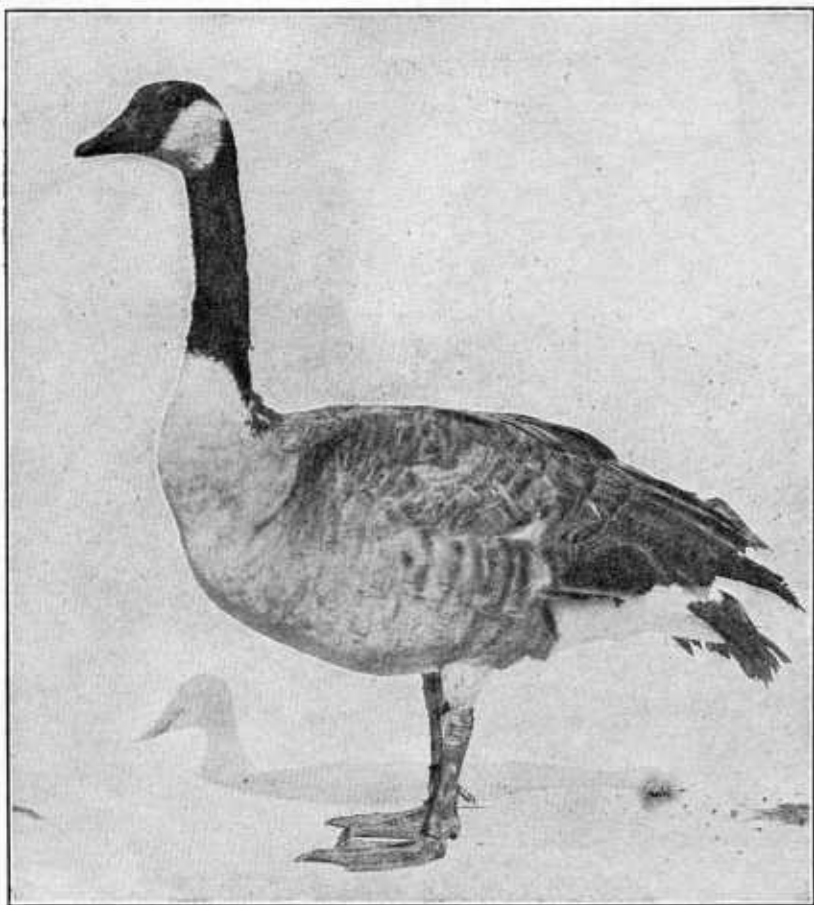


FIG. 6.—Wild or Canadian gander.

those of the Chinese geese, but their conformation is entirely different. They have long and snakelike heads, long and slender necks, and oblong bodies, with horizontal carriage. The Wild gander is frequently used to cross with Toulouse, African, and Embden geese, thereby producing the so-called Mongrel goose.

The Mongrel goose is highly prized as a market goose, as it is a rapid grower and has a fine quality of flesh and has much the appearance of the Wild goose. In color, the body of the Canadian goose

should be gray or dark gray, the breast light gray, and the lower part of the body white from the legs to the tail. The bill, eyes, head, neck, and tail are black, except for a white stripe on the side of the face. The ganders do not breed until they are 2 years old, and the geese seldom mate until the third season. They mate in pairs only, and seldom change mates unless one of them dies. They lay but few eggs—from 4 to 8 in a season—which should be hatched by the goose. The eggs require 30 days to incubate, seldom fail to hatch, and there is practically no loss in the young except by accident. This breed likes to nest on dry ground near the water, using straw, hay, or leaves for nesting material. At nesting time the geese are very cross and defend their nests and young against all encroachments.

#### EGYPTIAN.

The Egyptian is a small, brightly colored goose kept for ornamental purposes and rarely seen in this country. It resembles the wild goose in shape but weighs 2 pounds less in each class. The bill is purple or bluish red, and the legs and toes are reddish yellow. The color of the plumage of the back and body is gray and black, with the lower part of the body pale buff or yellow, penciled with black. The breast is chestnut and gray, and the tail is black. The wings are a glossy black with white shoulders.

#### SEBASTOPOL.

Sebastopol geese are rarely seen in this country. They are pure white in color and about the size of the Chinese or wild goose. Their special peculiarity is that of long, flowing, and slightly curling plumage on their backs, wings, and sides of their bodies. In many cases this extends to the ground, the plumage on neck, breast, and across shoulders being as smooth as that of other geese. They are kept for ornamental purposes only.

#### GOOSE BREEDING.

Practically all the geese in this country are raised in small flocks on general farms, and few, if any, farms are devoted entirely to raising geese. The fattening of geese, however, is conducted as a special business on a large scale in the producing sections, in which case the geese are collected from general farms, usually over a large area, and fattened for a few weeks before they are killed. In other sections, especially in Wisconsin, geese are raised quite extensively and fattened on the farms. A special trade for Wisconsin specially fattened geese has been built up in New York City and other large eastern cities. Geese can be raised successfully in small numbers and at a profit on farms where there is plenty of grass or pasture land with

a natural supply of water. Geese, both young and old, are very hardy and are rarely affected by any disease or insect pests. Grass makes up the bulk of the feed for geese, and it is doubtful whether it pays to raise them unless good grass range is available. Geese are

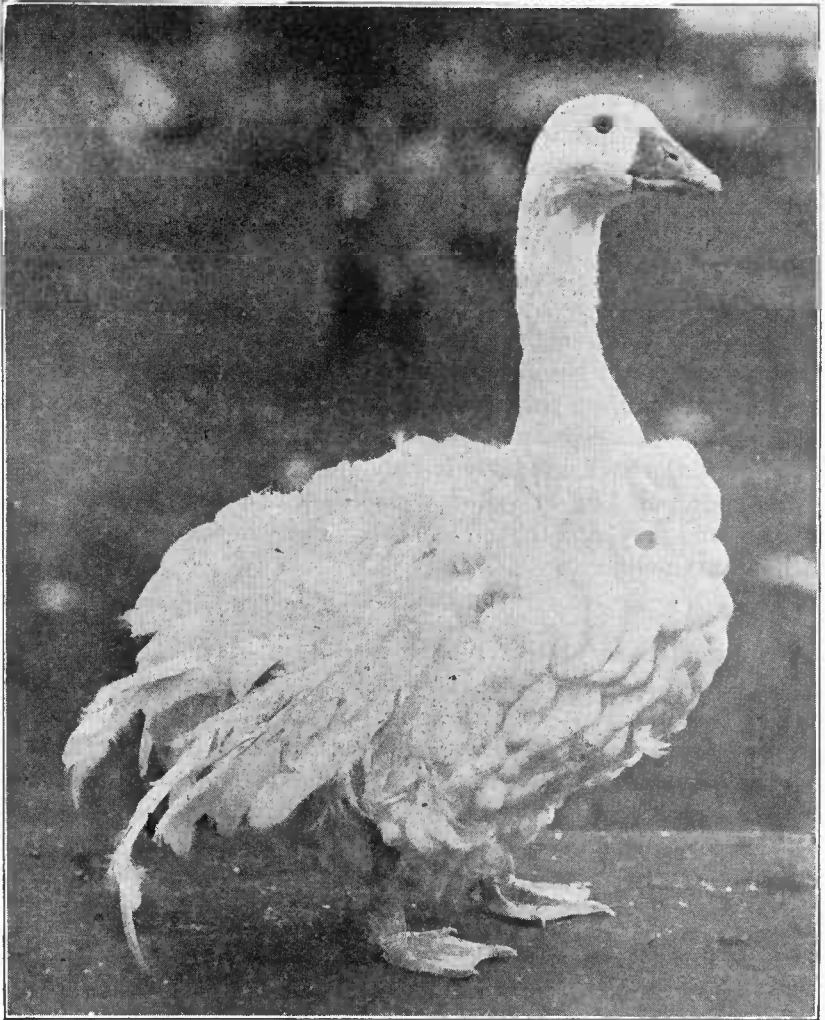


FIG. 7.—Sebastopol goose.

the closest known grazers, and both the mature geese and the partially grown goslings will get their entire living from a good pasture so long as the grass remains green. A body of water where they can swim is considered essential during the breeding season and is a good feature during the rest of the year. If there is no natural pond, an artificial one or tanks may be supplied to advantage. The market for geese is not so general as for chickens; this fact should be consid-

ered in undertaking to raise geese. The demand and the price paid for geese are usually good in sections where goose fattening is conducted on a large scale. Many geese are kept in the South largely for the production of feathers rather than for their flesh, but the use of feathers is not so general as it has been, making that end of the business less profitable.

#### HOUSES.

Except in winter or during stormy weather, when some protection should be provided, mature geese seldom need a house. Some kind of shelter, such as a shed open on the south side, a poultry house, or a barn, is usually provided by breeders in the North and is used

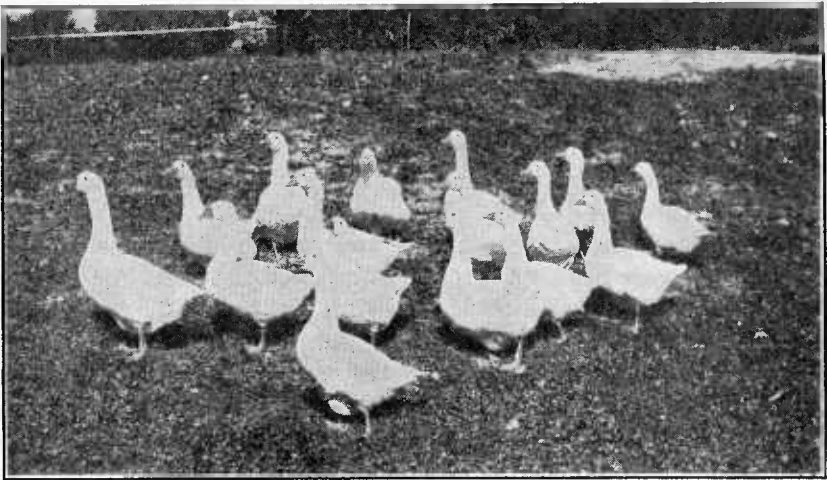


FIG. 8.—Flock of Embden geese on pasture.

by some breeders in the South. Coops, barrels, or some other dry shelter should be provided for young goslings. The goose houses should be kept clean and plenty of clean straw or shavings provided for the floor during the winter.

#### SELECTING AND MATING.

Geese, like other kinds of poultry, should be selected for size, prolificacy, and vitality. They should be mated several months prior to the breeding season to obtain the best results; therefore breeding stock should be bought in the fall and all changes in matings made then. Goose matings are not changed from year to year unless the results are unsatisfactory. If the matings are changed it is usually necessary to keep the previously mated geese so far apart that they can not hear each other. Sex is difficult to distinguish in geese, especially when they are young. The gander is usually somewhat larger

and coarser than the goose and has a shrill cry, while the female has a harsh, coarse cry. The gander has a longer neck and a larger head. The sex may be determined by inspecting the sexual organs or by the actions of the geese at mating time. The sphincter muscle which closes the anus of the female appears folded if stretched, while a light pressure on the corresponding section in the male will make the sexual organ protrude. This test is more easily made on a mature male and in warm weather. In common geese the male is lighter colored than the female.

A gander may be mated with from one to four geese, but pair or trio matings usually give the best results. The wild gander usually mates with only one goose. Geese are easily disturbed and should always be managed and handled gently. When mated, geese are allowed to run in flocks, but each mating may be kept in a colony by itself during the breeding season to keep the ganders from fighting. From 4 to 25 geese may be kept on an acre of land, and under most conditions 10 is a fair average. Wherever possible the geese should have free range on grass or stubble. Many people in the South keep them to kill the weeds in the cotton fields.

Toulouse and Embden geese will breed and produce some stock in their second year but do not mature or give best results for another year. They will sometimes lay the first year, but the results are usually unsatisfactory, and these eggs are often used for cooking. The females are usually kept until they are from 8 to 10 years old, or as long as they lay well, but ganders are seldom kept after they are 6 or 7 years old. Wild ganders, however, are kept as long as they will breed. Yearling ganders of the domestic breeds are often used for breeding, but both sexes are usually best for breeding when from 3 to 5 years old.

#### INCUBATION.

Geese are fed a ration to produce eggs during the latter part of the winter (about Feb. 1 in the northeastern section of this country) or so that the goslings will be hatched by the time there is good grass pasture. They are allowed to make nests on the floor of the house, or large boxes, barrels, or shelters are provided for that purpose. The eggs should be collected daily and kept in a cool place where the contents will not evaporate too freely; if kept for some time they may be stored in loose bran. The first eggs are usually set under hens, while the last ones which the goose lays may be hatched under either hens or the goose. If the eggs are not removed from the nest in which the goose is laying she will usually stop laying sooner than if they are taken away. The desire to sit can usually be broken up by confining her to a slat-bottom coop, with water to drink and only a very little feed, for from 2 to 4 days. Most breeders prefer to

raise all the goslings under hens, as geese sometimes become difficult to manage when allowed to hatch and rear their young. Turkeys also make excellent mothers. From 4 to 6 eggs may be set under a common hen and 10 or 11 under a goose or turkey. Eggs set under a hen should be turned by hand the same as eggs set in an incubator, as they are too large for the hen to turn them readily. Hens used for hatching goose eggs must be dusted with insect powder and have good attention, because the period of incubation of goose eggs is longer than for hens' eggs. Dust the hens thoroughly 2 or 3 days before the goslings are due to hatch. Goose eggs may be hatched in incubators and the goslings successfully raised in brooders, although it is not a common practice.

The period of incubation varies from 28 to 32 or more days. Moisture should be added to the eggs after the first week if set in incubators; this is usually done by sprinkling the eggs with warm water heated to a temperature of 90° or 100° F. Soak the eggs from one-half to a minute in warm water (100° F.) every 2 or 3 days after the fifteenth day and daily for the last 2 or 3 days. The hen's nest may be made on damp ground, in which case it is not advisable to sprinkle the eggs. When the nests are in barrels or boxes, and in dry weather, moisture should be added the same as for eggs in an incubator. Incubators should be run at a temperature between 101.5° and 102.5° F., or about 1° lower than for hens' eggs, with the thermometer just clearing or barely touching the top of the eggs. Goose eggs in an incubator should be cooled longer than hens' eggs, beginning about the tenth day. Toward the end of the hatch cool the eggs down to a temperature between 80° and 85° F. They may be tested once between the tenth and the fourteenth days, and those which are infertile or contain dead germs should be removed.

Goslings hatch slowly, especially under hens, and they are usually removed from under hens or geese as soon as hatched, and kept in a covered basket or box lined with warm cloth or flannel, near the stove, until the hatching is over, when they are put back under the hen or goose. Goslings hatched under hens should be examined for head lice, and a little grease—lard or vaseline—should be applied with the fingers on the head and neck. Some breeders who hatch with both geese and hens give all the goslings to the geese, which make the best mothers. A few breeders prefer to brood the goslings artificially, keeping them from 1 to 3 weeks in the house at night in a covered bushel basket. To keep a record of their age and breeding, the web of the feet of the newly hatched goslings should be punched. Hens with goslings may be confined to the coop and the goslings allowed to range. In mild weather the hens are allowed to brood the goslings for from 7 to 10 days, when the



latter are able to take care of themselves. It is very necessary to keep the young goslings dry, so they are usually kept confined in the mornings until the dew is dried off, and they should not be allowed to get into water until partly feathered. This occurs when they are from 2 to 4 weeks old, depending on the weather and their range. Goslings caught and apparently drowned in a cold rain may often be revived by drying in flannel near a fire. Good-sized growing coops with board floors should be provided for the goslings, which must be protected from their enemies. When on range, young goslings need some attention, as they may get lost or caught in post holes and odd corners. Young goslings, if confined, should be given good grass yards and the coops removed

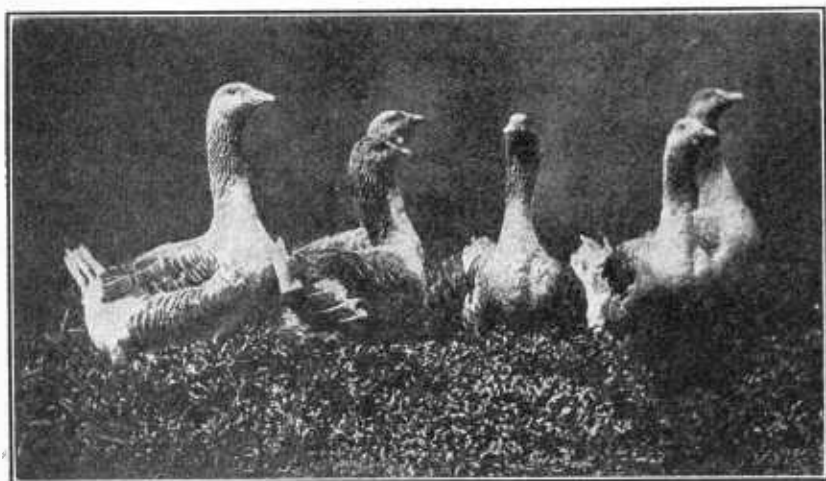


FIG. 9.—Geese which have good grass range pick up most of their living from it.

frequently to fresh grass. It is better to keep the growing goslings separate from the old stock. Shade should be provided in hot weather. If very young goslings are allowed to run with large animals, they are apt to be injured or killed.

#### CARE OF BREEDING GEES.

Geese are raised generally where they have a good grass range or pasture, and, except during the winter months, usually pick up most of their living. The pasture may be supplemented with light feeds of home-grown grains or wet mash daily, the necessity and quantity of this feed depending on the condition of the pasture. During the winter, when pasture is no longer available, they should have both grain and roughage, but great care should be taken not to overfeed the breeders so that they will become too fat, with the consequent result of poor fertility and unsatisfactory hatches. Oats

make a desirable grain feed for breeding geese, but a limited portion of corn, wheat, or barley may be added for variety. The greater part of the feed, however, should be made up of roughage, such as vegetables, clover, or alfalfa hay, chopped-corn stover, or silage. Silage is an ideal feed if it does not contain too much corn and is perfectly free from mold. It is desired to have the geese lay early, so that the first goslings will hatch by the time there is green grass for pasture; and as the breeding season approaches it is necessary to increase the quantity of feed slightly and add to it a mash, which is usually given in the morning, and may be made of 3 parts bran or shorts, 1 part corn meal, and one-fourth part meat scrap; or buttermilk may be used in place of meat scrap. This mash should be

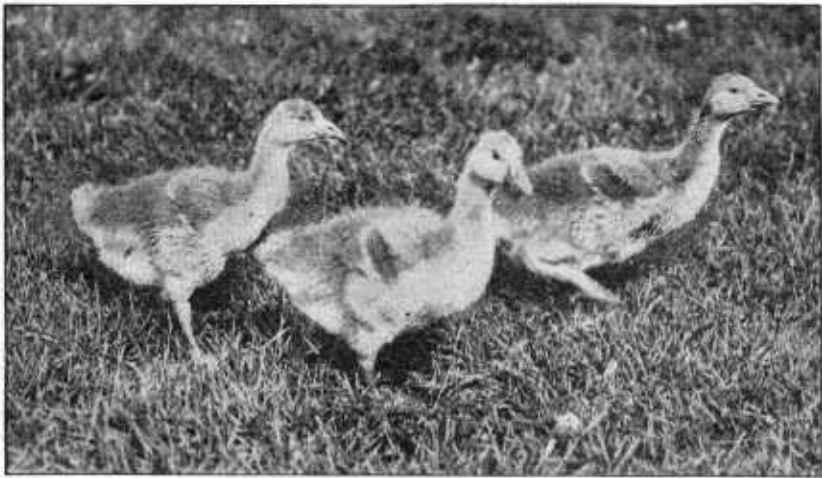


FIG. 10.—Young Toulouse goslings about 5 weeks old.

fed with the vegetables or roughage. Grit and oyster shell should be kept before the geese when they are laying and may be provided all the time to advantage. A constant supply of drinking water should be available at all times, and it is best supplied in drinking fountains or vessels so constructed that the stock can not get their feet into the water.

#### FEEDING THE GOSLINGS.

Goslings do not need feed until they are 36 hours old or more, when they should be fed stale bread soaked in milk or water, to which finely chopped boiled eggs may be added. This should be fed three or four times daily for the first 2 or 3 weeks, with chopped grass or some other green feed added, this latter to be increased in quantity from the first. Plenty of fresh, clean water should be supplied, and 5 per cent of fine grit or sharp sand may be added to the feed or kept in a hopper before the goslings. After 2 or 3 weeks,

if the goslings have a good grass range, they will need only one light feed daily of a mash made up of 2 parts shorts and 1 part of corn meal or ground oats or ground barley. After they are 6 weeks old, if they still need extra feed, change the mash to equal parts shorts, corn meal, and ground oats, with 5 per cent meat scrap. Where the pasture is good, many goslings are raised from the time they are 2 or 3 weeks old to fattening time without any grain feed, but the addition of a mash as given above is an advantage at all times. Whole grains are not usually fed until the goslings are well feathered.

### PREPARING FOR MARKET.

In a few sections young geese, when fully feathered or when the long flight wing feathers reach the tail, are fattened in large numbers

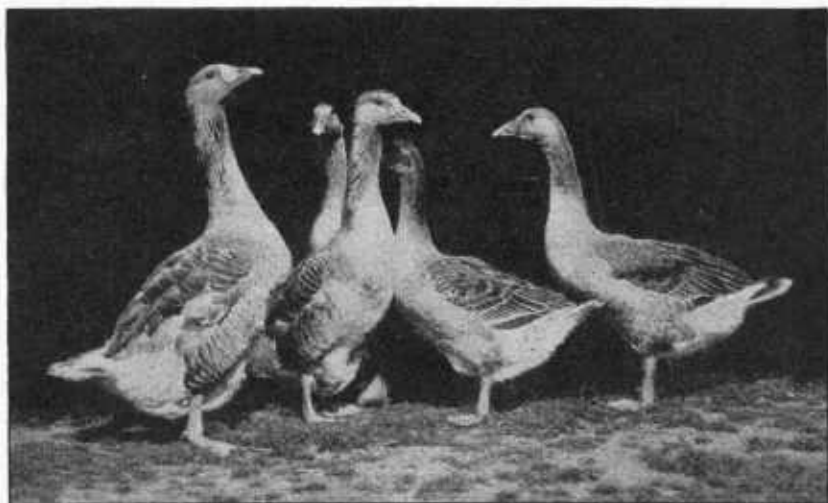


FIG. 11.—Showing the very rapid growth of well-fed Toulouse goslings. The two on the right and the one in the rear are young Toulouse geese about 12 weeks old.

by buyers who make a specialty of this business. Different methods are used successfully in the special fattening of geese on a large scale. A goose-fattening farm in Illinois buys large numbers of geese and fattens them for one month in an orchard or cornfield in flocks of 1,000 or more. No shelter is provided other than that of trees or standing cornstalks, except in unusually severe weather, when the geese are driven into sheds. Corn on the cob and plenty of water are kept before the geese all the time and they eat the leaves off the cornstalks for roughage. These geese are then shipped alive in a poultry car to the New York market. Some farmers fatten their own geese. The geese may be "pen fattened" in flocks of from 20 to 25 and fed three times daily, giving one feed of a moist but not sloppy mash made of one-third shorts and two-thirds corn meal and

two feeds of corn with some oats or barley. The pens should be kept partly darkened and the geese disturbed as little as possible. It is important to use plenty of bedding of oat straw, both to keep the pens clean and to provide roughage, as the geese will eat a considerable quantity of the straw. Some roughage or vegetables should be provided. An increase in weight of from 4 to 6 pounds can be obtained by this method of feeding.

#### NOODLING GEESE.

Another method which produces a much better fattened goose but involves considerably more work is to stuff large geese with noodles for 3 or 4 weeks. From 8 to 10 geese are confined to a pen about 8 by 12 feet, which is kept heavily bedded with fresh oat straw. The feeder sits on a box in one corner of the pen, holds the goose between his legs and stuffs it with noodles, usually beginning by feeding from 3 to 5 noodles three times daily and gradually increasing to 6 or 7 noodles five times daily at 4-hour intervals. The noodles are made of scalded corn meal, ground oats, ground barley, and ground wheat or wheat flour, using about equal parts of each. Add salt as for bread, thoroughly mix the feed, and put it through a sausage stuffer, cutting the product into pieces  $2\frac{1}{2}$  or 3 inches long. Boil them from 10 to 15 minutes, or until they float, in a wash boiler containing a wire rack which stands  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches above the bottom of the boiler. Dip the noodles in cold water and roll in flour to keep them from sticking together. Pour hot water over the noodles just before they are fed to make them slippery and keep them warm. The number of noodles fed depends on the size and condition of the bird and the judgment of the feeder. The noodles are put into the mouth, one at a time, and worked down with the hand on the outside of the neck. If any feed can be felt, no noodles are given at the next feeding time; otherwise the bird will go off its feed. Keep plenty of drinking water before the geese. The young ganders are used for this special fattening, and any older ganders or geese to be marketed. A partition extending halfway across the pen is used to keep the geese separate as they are fed. The pen is kept dark and the geese disturbed as little as possible. One man can feed from 50 to 100 geese by this method, but it involves lots of work and long hours, the first feed being given at 5 in the morning and the last at about 11 in the evening. A high price must be obtained for geese thus fed to make this kind of fattening profitable. Noodling will give a gain of from 6 to 10 pounds, while a price of from 10 to 15 cents a pound above that paid for geese not specially fattened is often received.

A goose should be handled by its neck rather than by its legs and held with the back toward the attendant. Where the geese are fed

individually the feeder usually wears gloves to protect his hands from bites. Care should be used in handling the geese at killing time, as the flesh bruises very easily, and the bruised spots detract from the appearance of the dressed product.

There is some demand for young geese from June to January, but most of them are sold at Thanksgiving and Christmas. Ten-weeks-old goslings of the largest breeds of purebred geese weigh as much as 10 pounds when forced for rapid growth and are sometimes marketed at that age as green geese at a good profit. Large cities containing a considerable foreign population usually offer the best markets for geese. The average monthly price paid for live geese on the wholesale market in New York City for the year 1921, beginning with January, was as follows: 27.9 cents a pound, 28.5, 20,

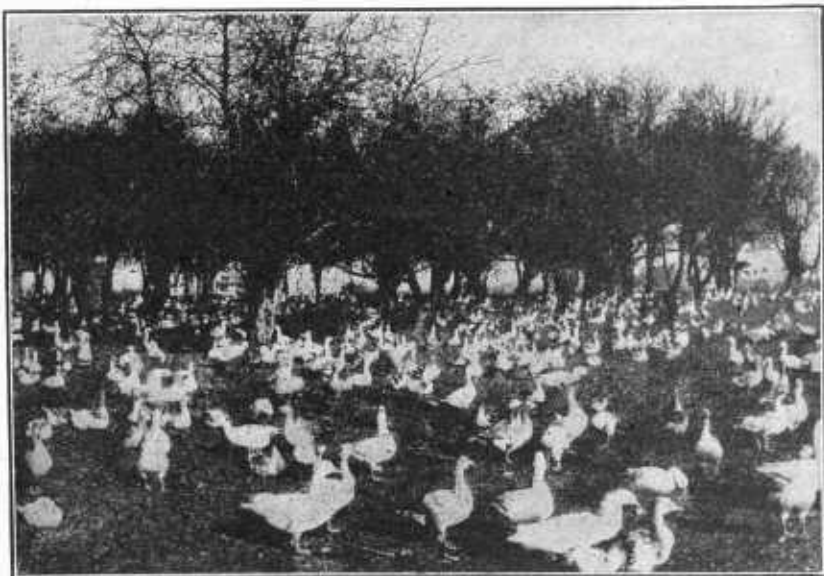


FIG. 12.—Flock of geese being fattened on a goose-fattening farm.

16.3, 15, 15, 15, 15, 19.6, 25.5, 26, and 24.2. Higher prices are obtained for young geese specially forced and sold in the summer. These prices were considerably lower than the prices paid for live hens during the same period, which were as follows: 34.9 cents a pound, 33.9, 37.3, 34, 34.4, 30.2, 29.8, 27.1, 27.1, 24.7, 23.1, and 25.1. The number of geese kept on farms in this country has decreased materially in the last 20 years, owing largely to the limiting of available range and partly to the lower prices which have been paid for geese, compared with prices paid for fowls and turkeys.

Geese are usually killed and picked in the same manner as other kinds of poultry, but are much more difficult to pick than hens or chickens. They are generally stuck through the main artery in the mouth with a long-bladed knife, followed by a blow on the back of the head with a short club. The wings are picked to the first joint, and the feathers are removed from the neck halfway to the

head, pulling with the feathers and not back toward the head. The soft pinfeathers and fine down may be partly removed by rubbing the body with moistened hands or by shaving the skin. The dry picking of geese is rather difficult, and the most common practice is to scald or steam the goose feathers before picking. This can be done over a wash boiler three-fourths full of boiling water, laying the dead goose on a burlap sack stretched tightly over the top of the boiler and steaming first the breast, then the back, and then each side. The whole process of steaming will not take more than 2 or 3 minutes, and the goose must be kept moving to prevent scalding the flesh. The goose is steamed until the feathers can be pulled out easily and the head is usually laid under the breast to keep the breast from scalding. The bird is then singed over an alcohol flame, the alcohol usually being burned in shallow tin plates.

Another method for removing the down is to sprinkle powdered rosin over the body of the goose and dip it into hot water, which melts the rosin so that it and the down can be easily rubbed off, leaving the body clean. Geese may also be steamed by scalding slightly and wrapping the body tightly for 5 minutes or longer in burlap or cloth to allow the steam to work thoroughly through the feathers. Some markets prefer dry-picked geese, while in other markets no difference is made in the price of scalded or dry picked.

After the geese are picked they are usually washed, dipped in hot water, and put into ice water to cool. Dressed geese are shipped packed in well-ventilated barrels in cool weather without ice, each goose being wrapped in paper with the head left out of the package. "Noodled" geese average to weigh about 25 or 26 pounds and individual weights of nearly 40 pounds have been obtained. Many farmers sell their geese alive, either to fatteners or for immediate slaughter.

#### PLUCKING LIVE GEESE.

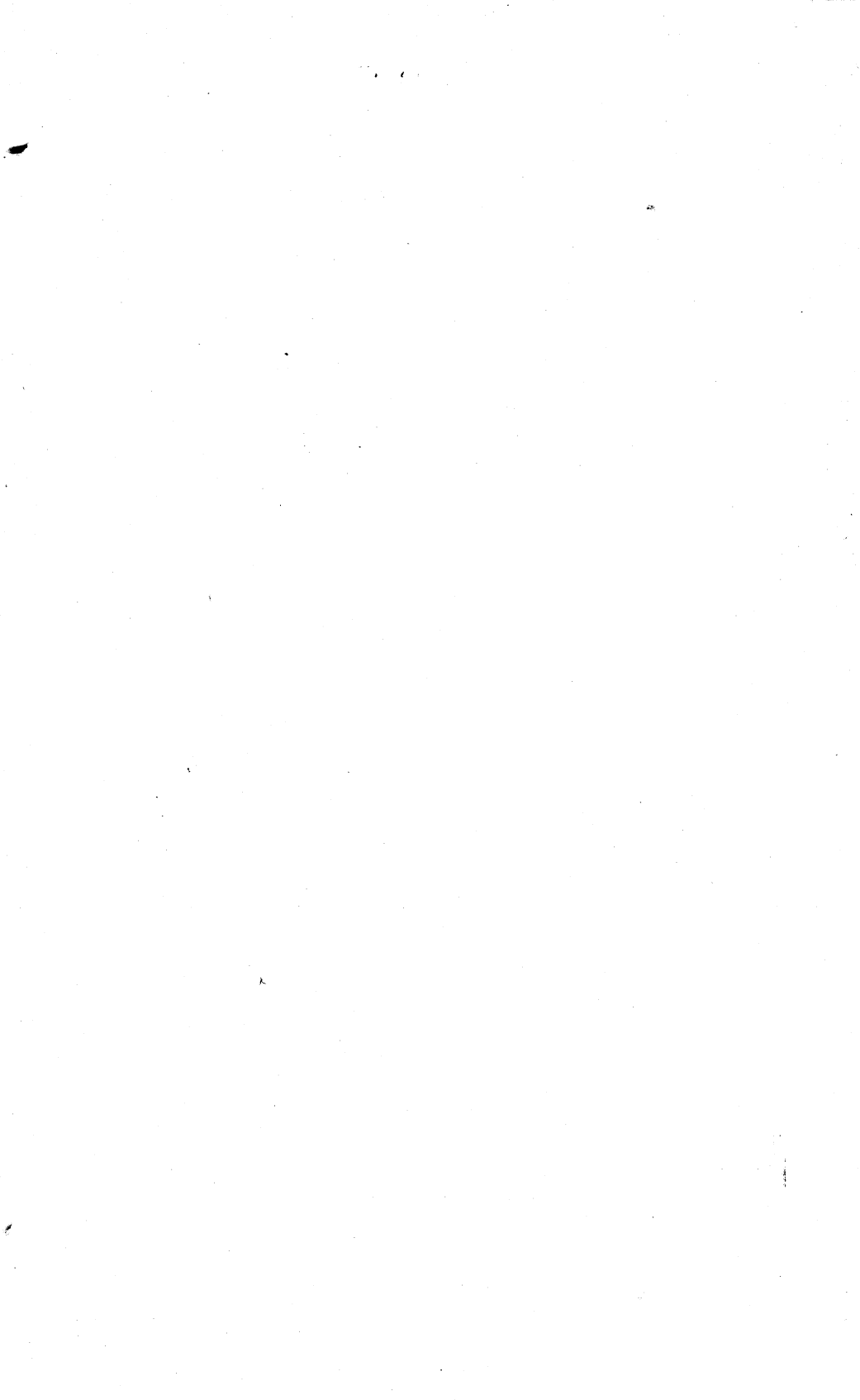
Many breeders of geese in the South and some in the Middle West and the North pluck the feathers from the live geese at some time prior to molting. Some pick as often as every 6 weeks during the spring, summer, and early in the fall, while others pick only once or twice a year, either in the spring or in both spring and fall. Feathers are considered ripe for picking when the quills appear dry and do not contain blood. Both young and old geese are plucked. The average yearly production of feathers per goose is about 1.1 pounds. This practice of plucking geese, however, is considered by many breeders to be cruel and injurious. Geese should not be picked during the breeding season. A stocking is usually put over the head of the goose, and part of the soft feathers on the breast, back, sides, and abdomen are pulled. Enough short feathers to support the wings

should always be left. Geese feathers were quoted in a prominent Ohio market in December, 1920, at \$1.00 a pound for pure white; average white, 75 cents to 80 cents; gray, 65 cents. These prices are for good dry feathers. The feathers should be partly cured before they are shipped, which may be done by placing them in loosely woven burlap sacks which are hung up in the loft of a building where they get good air circulation from all sides. Sacks of these feathers should not be laid on the floor or packed on top of one another until they are thoroughly dry. The demand for goose feathers and the practice of plucking geese appear to be decreasing, while more attention is given to the production of young geese for market.

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